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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

Executive Registry

72-5824

September 18, 1972

Mr. Richard Helms
Director, Central
Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Mr. Helms:

I am writing in regard to a report in the September 13th issue of the New York Times by Tad Szulc, a copy of which is enclosed. The report refers to "separate but concurring" studies prepared late last month by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency reporting that the North Vietnamese can sustain the fighting in South Vietnam "at the present rate" for the next two years despite American bombing.

The New York Times story stated that: "The substance of the reports was made available to the New York Times today by highly placed intelligence officials." I would appreciate it if you could arrange to have the Central Intelligence Agency report, on which Mr. Szulc's article was based, also made available to me.

Sincerely yours,


J. W. Fulbright
Chairman

Enclosure

Hanoi Not Able to Fight 2 Years at 'Present Rate'

By TAD SZULC
Special to The New York Times

9-13-72

WASHINGTON, Sept. 12—Official, along with others interviewed this week, said, how-
telligence agencies have con- sidered in recent reports sub- mitted to the White House that Hanoi can sustain the fighting in South Vietnam "at the present rate" for the next two years despite the heavy American bombing of North Vietnam.

In separate but concurring reports prepared late last month, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency declared that although the heavy bombing in the North since last April had been successful in hitting designated targets, it had failed to meaningfully slow the flow of men and equipment to South Vietnam.

A high-ranking intelligence official, along with others interviewed this week, said, how-
telligence agencies have con- sidered in recent reports sub- mitted to the White House that Hanoi can sustain the fighting in South Vietnam "at the present rate" for the next two years despite the heavy American bombing of North Vietnam.

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FIGHTING POWER OF NVA EVALUATED

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The reports were made available to The New York Times today by highly placed intelligence officials.

These officials, citing daily intelligence estimates as well as the bombing reports, said that all the indications were that the Communists were preparing new "high-point" offensives throughout South Vietnam within 30 days.

Following are the highlights of the current intelligence estimates and findings made available by the intelligence officials:

Some 20,000 fresh North Vietnamese troops have infiltrated into South Vietnam in the last six weeks, making an approximate total of 100,000 regular soldiers there. Only one training brigade is said to remain in North Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese now have the highest number of regular troops in the Mekong River delta, southwest of Saigon, since the start of the war. The total was estimated at 20,000 to 30,000 men compared with 3,000 a year ago. Most of the infiltration has occurred since the start of the Communist offensive March 30—and intelligence officials said that the delta now was "our biggest problem," as pacification programs had become seriously threatened.

A third petroleum pipeline has been completed between the Chinese frontier railroad terminal of Pingliang and Hanoi. The work began in May,

after the United States mined Haiphong harbor, but the completion of the third pipeline became known only in recent days.

The North Vietnamese have built additional pipelines southward from Hanoi to supply their forces in South Vietnam. One of them reaches down to the Ashau Valley.

Intelligence officials, discussing the reports of the two agencies, said that it was virtually impossible for air strikes to cut the pipelines, which are four inches in diameter. Two officials said that whenever a pipeline was hit, North Vietnamese technicians turned it off at pumping stations while rapid repairs were made.

As for railways from China, they said, the North Vietnamese have to a large extent neutralized the effects of the bombing by marshaling all available rolling stock and manpower.

The officials said that the

North Vietnamese "ant tactics" involved moving supplies by rail up to a bombed-out bridge or a severed highway. The supplies are then reportedly moved by river barges, truck, bicycle or back pack to railroad cars waiting beyond a damaged section of the track or a destroyed bridge, and reloaded. At the same time, it was noted, labor units repair the tracks and bridges.

United States intelligence estimates are that since the start of the Communist offensive at the end of March in the northern part of South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong have lost 100,000 dead on the battlefield and in bombing attacks. The South Vietnamese toll is put at 15,000 to 20,000.

But intelligence officials emphasized that both sides had suffered greatly from the heavy losses of men and equipment. The officials said that the North Vietnamese had lost 100,000 men and equipment, and the Vietcong had lost 100,000 men and equipment.

'Officials' Conclusions

The conclusion reached by the intelligence agencies, officials said, was that the "ant tactics" used in the movement of supplies and the three underground pipelines had enabled the North Vietnamese to keep their forces fighting.

They said that frequent pilots' reports of "secondary explosions" along the infiltration trails and the capture of arms and munitions caches—a 143-ton cache was reported found by South Vietnamese troops last week—suggested that material continued moving southward.

The "secondary explosions" are said to indicate that munitions depots or loaded trucks have been hit while other targets have been under attack.

The officials said the predictions of new enemy offensives during September and October were based on the deployment of troops southward, the "preparation of battlefields" by demolition and other new technical units, captured documents and information from defectors and prisoners of war.

These officials emphasized